/38 cont./

164 85. Just like the foregoing is the utopia of those who imagine the Indians absolutely exempt from sickness and only infected by contact with our civilization. Nothing could be less correct. Unfortunately, the Indians know through sad experience an infinity of endemic diseases. In addition to the generic parán and emorón, being ill or feeling bad, they call by their own names the chills of malarial fever (e-komi-ma), measles (apikoroimá), smallpox (apotoimá), dysentery (kuasuk and uenarok), diarrhea with blood (muenimá), whooping cough and other coughs (arautaimá), tuberculosis (apueká), the common cold (atón), anchylostomiasis (motó, poriké, etc.), swelling of the arm (achín and yeuán muré), biliousness (e-ve-piká), blindness (enumí), and even venereal diseases in general (samoroní). All these words are not foreign or brought in, which indicates with considerable likeliness that the diseases that they denote were not either.

Concerning these diseases, Father Las Casas himself, who was not in the least suspicious when stating something against the Indians, says that the natives of the Antilles confessed to him that those illnesses were /39/ already known among them before Christians came to their lands.

278 86. But, at least, it will be said, are not these Indians perfect herbists, with a knowledge of an infinite number of plants and their curative properties? This is, as well, a gratuitous and false supposition.

87. It is true that the Indians know an infinite number of plants; and there is no doubt that, given their talent for observation and their intimate contact with the other kingdoms of nature, they would have discovered many of the therapeutic properties of plants if medicine had been for them something separate from magic and sickness something apart from the maleficent influence of occult beings. But the opposite occurred: imagination sidetracked their observation and animism diverted them from physicism.